

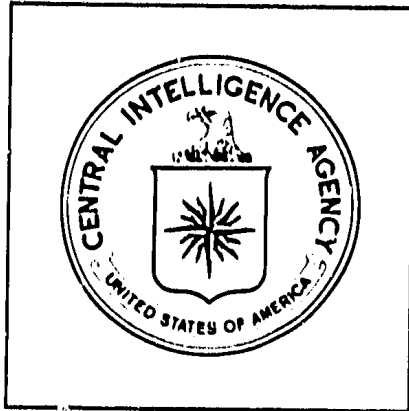
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Middle East-Africa-South Asia

ANNEX NOTES

State Dept. review completed

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145

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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

CONTENTS

Jordan: Parliamentary Elections to be Postponed	1
Iran: Development of the Rastakhiz Party . . .	3

Dec 31, 1975

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After several months of indecision, King Husayn has decided to postpone elections for the Jordanian parliament that would have been due in late March. Prime Minister Rifai, in a conversation with the US ambassador on December 29, indicated that there will be no public announcement of the decision; the fact that the government will not announce a date for elections, as it would be required to do by early February, will be a clear signal of its intention. The King dissolved parliament after the Arab summit meeting in Rabat in October 1974, ostensibly in preparation for holding elections on the East Bank only.

The elections issue has posed a major dilemma for the King. By holding elections on the East Bank, he would provide the Israelis with an excuse for altering the administration of the occupied West Bank, thereby weakening the legal ties between the East Bank and the West Bank. On the other hand, a formal cancellation of elections on the East Bank would risk alienating the other Arab states who might believe that he was still trying to recover the West Bank in violation of the Rabat agreement.

According to Rifai, Husayn will reconvene the old parliament, which represented both the East and West Banks, on February 23, and have it amend the constitution so that the King and cabinet can postpone elections indefinitely. The King will meet informally with the members of parliament prior to February 23 to seek all of their signatures on the proposed amendment. West Bank parliamentarians reportedly fully support the postponement, which will enable them to retain their seats and salaries. A number of East Bankers support the amendment also. To win the support of lower house members who have been appointed senators since parliament was dissolved and who will have to go back to the lower house if it is recalled, Rifai has

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Dec 31, 1975

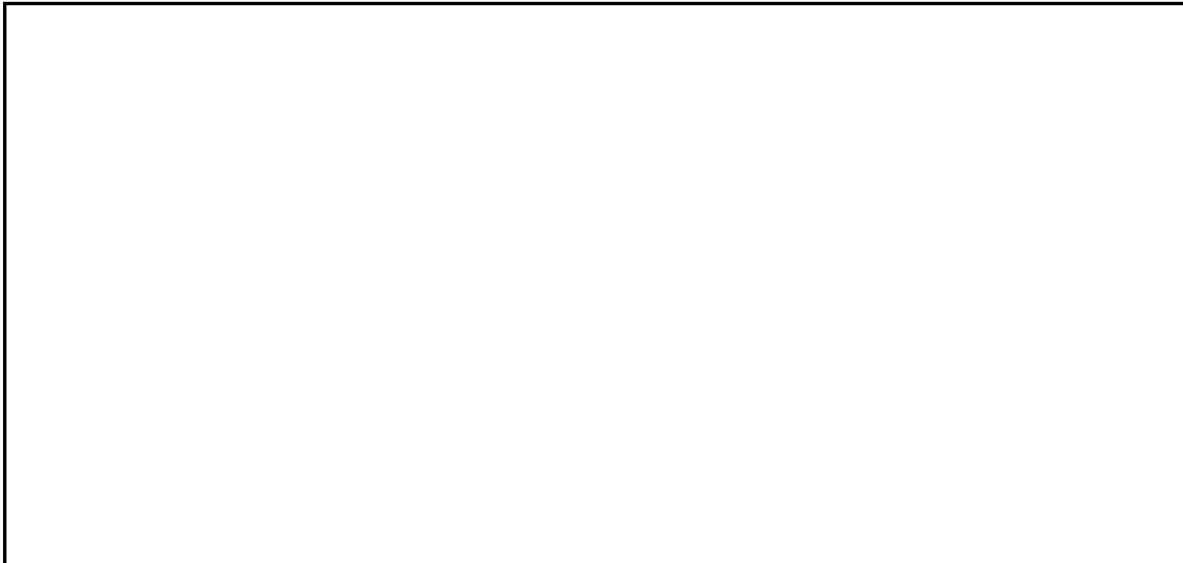
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promised them reappointment to the Senate with increased salaries and higher prestige when parliament reconvenes. Although Rifai appeared confident that the scenario would go off as planned, the US embassy believes some members of parliament might attempt to limit the period during which the King could unilaterally postpone elections.

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Dec 31, 1975

2

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Iran

Development of the Rastakhiz Party

It has been ten months since the Shah decreed that Iran would have a single legal political party--ending his sham experiments with a multi-party system. Questions about what he hoped to achieve by his action remain.

The work of organizing the Rastakhiz Party has proceeded fitfully. It is most complete at the national level; provincial and local organization is still largely on paper. Organizers claim it will take another 6 to 12 months before the party is functioning at all levels. Implementation of the important "political education" program will take even longer.

Acting as a drag on the work of the party is the Shah's insistence that senior party officials serve as unpaid volunteers. Such officials inevitably give first priority to their regular jobs and tend to see their party role as an exploitable adjunct to their private economic affairs and ambitions. As long as this is the case, the new set up will probably not shake Iranian politics from its traditional mold, which depends heavily on personal contacts and force of personality rather than on institutions or political parties.

It is still unclear whether the party's evolution will be toward meaningful political expression by Iranians--the Shah's avowed purpose--or toward reinforcement of authoritarian rule. Given the scope of the organization, it is possible that the Rastakhiz Party, if it gains momentum, could evolve in ways the Shah might not have intended. Some of the nation's most talented individuals, including some who show a degree of independence, have been drawn under the party umbrella. A party paper has been created and over 7,000 urban and rural centers established to educate Iranians on political issues. A youth wing

(Continued)

Dec 31, 1975

3

is also be established. Over 40 party committees have been appointed to debate and establish party policy on matters it is permitted to pronounce on, such as housing, labor legislation, and social affairs.

At the same time, however, the party can easily be the vehicle to impose even tighter political control. Top party and government personnel are closely integrated as they are in most authoritarian one party systems. The Shah is party head; to criticize the party is to criticize him. Prime Minister Hoveyda is secretary general, two of the Shah's most trusted lieutenants head major party bodies, and other cabinet ministers serve in key positions. While these men have displayed administrative abilities, none have shown any disposition to question the palace.

The Shah's much ballyhooed creation of two party wings has so far been a phony attempt to "stimulate debate" without creating factions. There is as yet no evidence that the Shah is willing to relax control to the point that such debate will ever be more than a facade. Crucial issues such as foreign, oil, and defense policies remain off limits. Moreover, on less controversial issues "democratic centralism" is the rule. No deviations are allowed after decisions are made, and the Shah's men control the decision-making process.

Many Iranians regard the notion of freer political expression, as sponsored by the Shah, with cynicism. The US consulate in Tabriz, reports there is little public enthusiasm in western Iran for the Rastakhiz Party. One deputy governor dismissed it as a joke that would pass when the Shah tired of it or the party began to show independence of the palace.

A test of the Shah's sincerity in wanting wider political participation will come when the party is well established at the grass roots and local and regional interests begin to challenge Tehran's development plans and its allocation of resources. A clue to his intent will be whether

(Continued)

Dec 31, 1975

4

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he fosters an identity of party and government personnel at the provincial and local levels. Such a practice would tend to stifle challenges, while separation would increase the chances for a clash of interests.

Some observers have argued that the creation of a one party state has heightened the likelihood of political instability once the Shah dies and power passes to the Crown Prince, now 15 years old. The Shah may have believed the opposite. The former controlled two-party system was inefficient and unwieldy. The Shah may prefer to turn over to his successor a country in which the powers of government are coupled with those of a single country-wide political organization having a single chain of command from the palace to the village. He may view the potential for control inherent in such a system as offering the best chance for preserving the Phalavi dynasty.

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Dec 31, 1975

5

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